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**Title:** Protecting Immigrants and Refugees in King County

**Keywords:** *Immigration, Immigrant and Refugee Communities, Immigration Enforcement Activities, Welcoming Cabinet, Chartered Deportation Flight Transparency*

**Sponsoring Agency:** King County Executive's Office



**King County**

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An Executive Order establishing key protections for immigrants and refugees in King County, including directives for cabinet departments and limitations on civil immigration enforcement in county-owned and county-controlled buildings.

**WHEREAS**, King County is committed to protecting the rights of immigrant and refugee residents and providing government services to all people, regardless of their immigration status; and

**WHEREAS**, immigrants and refugees are foundational to the identity of King County, and their contributions strengthen the regional economy and cultural vibrancy of communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the current federal administration has deployed aggressive immigration enforcement tactics in American cities, often using masked agents without visible identification of an agency, to carry out a mass deportation agenda; and

**WHEREAS**, the current federal administration has significantly expanded expedited removal, allowing for rapid deportation of non-citizens without due process; and

**WHEREAS**, in Minneapolis, "Operation Metro Surge" has led to over 4,000 arrests and the killing of two residents by federal immigration officials; and

**WHEREAS**, civil immigration enforcement is solely the responsibility of the federal government, and King County does not interfere or assist with these activities; and

**WHEREAS**, King County adheres to the Keep Washington Working Act, passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2019, which prohibits state and local law enforcement agencies from inquiring into immigration status and from providing information to federal immigration authorities for civil immigration enforcement, unless required by law; and

**WHEREAS**, the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the federal government from commandeering the County's property and resources related to civil immigration enforcement activities against the County's will; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 320.20 of the King County Charter states that the County Executive shall supervise all administrative offices and departments established by this charter or created by the county council; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 320.20 of the King County Charter states that the County Executive shall be the peace officer of the county and shall execute and enforce all ordinances and state statutes within the county; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2025, the King County Council adopted a “Welcoming King County” motion strengthening commitments that the County will not assist federal immigration enforcement actions and committing to additional support for immigrant and refugee communities and Ordinance 19963 extending key requirements to county contractors; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2026, the King Council adopted a first-in-the-nation motion calling on Congress to put in place significant guardrails on any funding appropriated for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS); and

**WHEREAS**, King County Executive Girmay Zahilay has directed all county departments, including the King County Sheriff’s Office, to not assist civil federal immigration enforcement actions in King County; and

**WHEREAS**, the federal administration has signaled that other American cities may experience surges of immigration enforcement activities which may lead to an increase of detainments and deportation flights; and

**WHEREAS**, the fear of immigration raids is disrupting daily life in King County, and many immigrant and refugee residents are reporting being afraid to go to work, school, seek medical care, or report a crime to local law enforcement, making communities less safe as a result; and

**WHEREAS**, the situation is rapidly evolving and a coordinated county response is warranted to defend the rights and dignity of King County’s immigrant and refugee communities;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I GIRMAI ZAHILAY, King County Executive, do hereby order as follows:

Section 1. Establishing Welcoming County Subcabinet

To reaffirm our values and ensure King County remains inclusive and welcoming for immigrant and refugee communities, the King County Executive Office will establish a new Welcoming County Subcabinet (“Subcabinet”). The Subcabinet will be convened and chaired by Deputy King County Executive (or designee) and staffed by the newly created Immigrant and Refugee Policy Advisor position (or representative in the King County Executive Office). It will meet regularly to discuss and develop policy, budget, and administrative action proposals that strengthen the County’s support and protection of residents impacted by federal civil immigration enforcement, particularly immigrant, refugee, and asylee communities.

The Subcabinet shall include a representative from:

1. King County Executive Office;
2. King County Department of Public Defense;
3. King County Department of Community and Human Services;
4. King County Department of Public Health;
5. King County Department of Local Services;
6. King County Metro Transit Department;
7. King County Office of Emergency Management;
8. King County Department of Executive Services;
9. King County Sheriff’s Office;
10. King County Department of Human Resources;

11. King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention;
12. King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks; and
13. King County Department Information Technology

The King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office will also be invited to participate in the Subcabinet.

The Subcabinet shall submit monthly briefings to the King County Executive Office, including:

- Engagement with community partners, including immigrant small business owners, service providers, and organizations providing legal support to immigrants and refugees in King County,
- Engagement with other jurisdictions, including Washington state, city governments within King County, neighboring counties, and federal partners,
- Updated information about concerns and threats facing immigrant and refugee communities in King County,
- Proposed administrative reforms that can be implemented immediately within existing authority of the King County Executive, and
- Recommended ordinance changes and budget proposals requiring King County Council action.

The Subcabinet will work with the King County Council to explore an ordinance to create a moratorium on development of new detention facilities in unincorporated King County and establish additional limitations on county-owned and controlled properties.

## Section 2. Prioritizing Resources for Emergency Support

The King County Executive Office will identify resources for organizations serving immigrant, refugee and asylee communities to meet current and emergent needs of residents, who due to their immigration status, are directly impacted by aggressive federal civil immigration enforcement.

Specifically, the King County Executive Budget Office will allocate \$2 million in emergency support funds to meet emerging needs for immigrant, refugee, and asylee communities in King County including but not limited to housing supports such as rental assistance, legal aid support, or food assistance.

## Section 3. Law Enforcement and Public Safety

The King County Executive directs the King County Sheriff's Office to develop guidance by March 16, 2026 about the King County Sheriff's Office's planned response to potential unlawful action by federal law enforcement officers. The guidance must include information about protocols for responding to 911 reports from the public regarding confirmed or suspected illegal interactions between federal officers and members of the public. This can include but is not limited to clear protocols for:

- Verifying law enforcement personnel who are not displaying official credentials;
- Creating appropriate documentation including use of body camera recordings;

- Guidance for deputies about responding to conflicts involving King County residents and federal law enforcement.

The King County Executive also directs the King County Sheriff's Office to produce publicly available materials about the roles and responsibilities of the Sheriff's Office, resources to help the public identify and differentiate sheriff's deputies from federal immigration officers, information in other languages and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) resource.

#### Section 4. Supporting Community Education and Response

The King County Executive directs all King County departments to:

- Complete a comprehensive review of their policies and protocols to ensure they fully adhere to Keep Washington Working Act, the Courts Open to All Act, and King County Code Section 2.15.
- Support community education and Know Your Rights initiatives including but not limited to coordinating with partners to expand in-language information about community resources, legal and civil rights, and help make these resources more accessible to the public.

#### Section 5. Affirming Executive Order PFC-7-1-1-EO and Transparency at King County International Airport

The King County Executive commits to support Executive Order PFC-7-1-1-EO ("King County International Airport- Transparency on Use of Airport for Immigrant Deportations") and further directs King County International Airport to:

- Work with King County Information Technology to upgrade and install additional security cameras that will provide greater transparency to the public.
- Submit a plan to the King County Executive Office within 30 days to provide improved observation space at the airport for the public that will be available at all times during airport operations.

#### Section 6. Limit on Civil Immigration Enforcement in County-Owned and County-Controlled Buildings and on Fixed-Properties

The King County Executive directs the departments to immediately implement the following restriction on County-owned and County-controlled properties:

There shall be no civil immigration enforcement activities in the non-public areas of County-owned and County-controlled buildings or on other fixed-properties, unless required by federal law. This restriction only applies to County-owned and County-controlled parking lots, vacant lots, buildings, or garages. These areas shall not be used for staging areas, processing locations, or operations bases for immigration enforcement activities. For purposes of this policy, "staging area" means an area that is used to assemble, mobilize, and deploy vehicles, equipment, or materials, and related personnel, for the purpose of carrying out civil immigration enforcement operations are hereby restricted. This restriction does not apply to public right-of-way used for pedestrian and vehicular traffic or the King County International Airport.

The King County Executive directs the Welcoming County Subcabinet to determine within 60 days if there are other County-owned and County-controlled properties where limitations on civil immigration enforcement would be feasible.

Section 7. Engaging in Federal Advocacy

The King County Executive Office will work with Washington state's Federal Congressional Delegation to advocate for no additional funding for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) until they change their current dangerous and potentially illegal policies and procedures.

Section 8. Effective Date

This Executive Order shall take effect immediately.

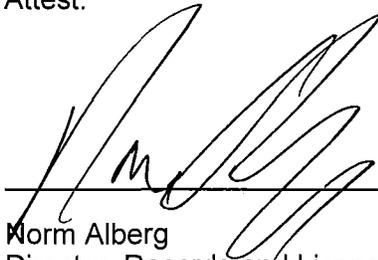
Dated and effective this 12 day of February, 2026



Girmay Zahilay

King County Executive

Attest:



Norm Alberg

Director, Records and Licensing Services Division, Department of Executive Services